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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBAI 006881

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016
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SUBJECT: CUSTOMS OPERATIONS IN THE EMIRATE OF AJMAN

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CLASSIFIED BY: Paul R Sutphin, Consul General, Dubai, UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. Summary. On November 8 the director general of Ajman Port and Customs discussed customs operations in the Emirate of Ajman with Poleconoffs. Ajman customs has 12 officers who enforce UAE federal customs regulations and collect Ajman customs duties. Customs officers are said to inspect nearly 25 percent of the cargo entering and leaving Ajman, both in containers and onboard dhows. Ajman's customs officers are trained in Dubai and other Arab countries. End Summary.

2.(U) Poleconoffs met on November 8 with Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdullah al-Nuaimi, the director general of Ajman Port and Customs Department, to discuss customs operations in the Emirate of Ajman. Al-Nuaimi is also the director general of the Ajman Free Zone, which is collocated with Ajman Customs.

3.(C) In the UAE, each emirate maintains separate customs services. Ajman, the smallest emirate has only 12 officers who cover Ajman port. They are responsible for all inbound and outbound cargo and also enforce intellectual property rights. Though Ajman Customs is independent of other Emirati customs agencies, all emirates apply UAE federal customs regulations. According to al-Nuaimi, UAE federal customs officials have the right to inspect and audit each emirate's customs service. His comments however, suggest federal oversight is not actively exercised.

Container Traffic and Inspection

4.(SBU) Al-Nuaimi stated that Ajman port handled 28,000 TEUs (twenty foot equivalent units) of container cargo in 2005. In 2006 he expected the port to handle 35,000 TEUs, which is the port's maximum annual container capacity. Al-Nuaimi asserted that 20-25 percent of the containers are opened and inspected. When a discrepancy is discovered, the customs officers impound the container and seek an explanation from the shipper or consignee. If customs determines criminal intent, the Ajman police will be given the case for prosecution.

Dhow Traffic and Inspection

5.(U) According to al-Nuaimi, Ajman handles an average of 30

cargo dhows per month; however, the number of dhows is lower in the summer due to unfavorable winds. The dhows load and unload along a quay near the area known as the Iranian market. Most of the dhows sail to Iran, India, Pakistan, and to a lesser extent Somalia, and Yemen. Dhows carry a wide variety of goods from Ajman, e.g., automobile spare parts, tires, rice, and sugar. Charcoal is the main cargo carried by dhows coming from Somalia.

6.(C) Al-Nuami said dhows entering UAE waters are subject to inspection by the UAE Coast Guard. He claimed that all dhows are inspected by Ajman customs officers. The area where the dhows load and unload is uncontrolled. Commercial and private vehicles have easy access to the area. Comment: Poleconoffs have never observed customs or police officers in the vicinity of the dhow quay. While the dhows may be inspected as they leave port, the random and dense pack of goods would make it nearly impossible to confirm what is on board without unloading the vessel. End Comment.

Training

7.(SBU) Ajman's customs officers receive their basic training with Dubai Customs officers in that emirate. Some of the officers have received additional training in the other Gulf Cooperation Council states and in Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordan. Al-Nuaimi was interested in training opportunities offered by the USG; however, he indicated that the officers have extremely limited English language abilities.

Future Plans

8.(C) Al-Nuaimi revealed Ajman's plans to build a new port, which will be located next to Hamriyah port in Sharjah. The new port will have a depth of 15 meters. All shipping will be shifted to the new port when it is completed. Ajman's current

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port area and free zone are slated for redevelopment. Mixed commercial and residential buildings and a large shopping mall will replace a mixed cargo loading and industrial area. The new facilities will remain a part of the free zone, though, the differentiation between free zone activities and non-free zone activities is unclear.

19. (C) COMMENT: Although Al-Nuaimi was friendly and relatively open in the discussion, he did not appear to have in-depth knowledge of Ajman's port and customs operations. His interests appear to be with the commercial success of the Ajman Free Zone, which could be in direct conflict with his duties as head of customs. His claim that customs inspects 20-25 percent of containers is quite high, considering the port does not have x-ray equipment and there are so few officers.

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